

New Year Countdown

Written by Utah Department of Health
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If you didn't exactly reach your health goal this past year, there's good news. The next year is right around the corner, and with it comes an opportunity for a brand new start. This is typically a time for both reflecting upon the past and making new commitments towards the future. Setting new goals may be challenging, but it just takes practice. After a few weeks or months, it will become a positive habit. Knowing that you can make small changes can give you the motivation and confidence to tackle a bigger goal. You may choose to become a nonsmoker or start exercising regularly.

To make a life change, you need more than a decision. You need a plan. Having a plan is the best way to make any life change-big or small. It's the difference between a goal and a wish. The following tips can help you successfully plan and achieve your goals:

1. Be specific. When thinking about goals, be as exact as possible. People who set specific goals are more likely to succeed. For example, instead of saying that you want to save money, set a specific goal to save \$20 (or whatever your goal amount is) per week.
2. Put it in writing. Write down exactly what you want to achieve and post it in a place where you will see it every day. This will help remind you of what you're working toward. When you write, use positive terms. For example, instead of writing, "I will stop eating junk food" re-word your goal in more positive terms: "I will make healthy food choices."
3. Set realistic goals. When you think about setting goals, make sure that they are within your reach. Be mindful of your finances, schedule, and other personal affairs. Remembering these important factors will help you set realistic goals. It's unreasonable to expect to make a lot of big changes at the same time.
4. Develop an action plan. Create a timeline with steps toward your goal. Set deadlines for

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each step and cross them off as you go. Sometimes just crossing things off and watching your list get smaller can give you a sense of accomplishment and help you stay motivated.

5. Believe in yourself. Stay positive about your progress. Share your goal with friends and ask them to help keep your spirits up.

6. Be flexible. Keep in mind that setbacks can happen. Don't get discouraged and give up. Try again! Your hard work will pay off!

7. Ask for help. If you get stuck or need a little encouragement, don't be afraid to talk about it. You might be surprised what kind of support people offer.

8. Reward yourself. Acknowledge your achievements, even the small ones. Reaching a goal takes hard work and you should be proud of your efforts.

Setting clear and realistic goals can lead to a healthier lifestyle and improved self-esteem. All positive changes – small or large – can improve your everyday life. Make this New Year count and create a plan to follow through on your resolutions!